

## 5 Steps to a Healthy Body Weight for Teens

Healthy eating and physical activity are important parts of being healthy and feeling good. When you eat well you have the nutrients and energy you need to grow. You also have energy to participate in sports, and perform well in class. Being physically active can also help you to be strong and healthy. It gives you energy to do things you enjoy. Being active also improves your confidence and helps you feel relaxed.

The foods you eat give you energy in the form of calories. Your body uses energy in many ways. One way that your body uses energy is for physical activity. Another way that your body uses energy is for growth.

The teenage years are a time of rapid growth. It's natural to gain weight during this time. But too much weight gain can be a problem. Remember that healthy bodies come in many sizes. Focus on your eating habits and your physical activity rather than your body weight.

Learn ways to eat healthy and be active by following the 5 steps to a healthy body weight below.



### Steps You Can Take

#### 1. Follow the Science of "Canada's Food Guide"

"Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide"

[www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide) is a good place to start when it comes to healthy eating. Your body needs food from all 4 groups **every day**. Eat food from at least 3 of the 4 food groups at each meal. Eat 3 meals a day and 1 to 3 snacks. Try some of the ideas below when making your food choices:

- Choose whole fruits and vegetables instead of drinking juice. One serving 125 mL ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup) of juice has more sugar and calories than the same amount of fruit. Whole fruit and vegetables also have fibre. Eating more fibre is part of eating healthy.
- Choose whole grains which are high in fibre and low in sugar, fat and salt. They are packed with nutrients and will help you to feel full.

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Whole grain breads, cereals, and pasta are some ideas.

- Enjoy low fat milk products like skim or 1% milk, soy milk, or low fat yogurt. Lower fat milk products are healthy choices. They have just as much calcium and vitamin D as higher fat choices.
- Trim away the fat you can see on meat and look for skinless chicken or turkey. Beans, lentils, and tofu also make healthy choices.
- Drink water when you are thirsty. Carry your own water bottle. You will save the environment and your money. You will also avoid extra calories found in juices, pop, sweetened ice tea and sports drinks.
- Choose your fats carefully. The **type** of fat you eat is as important as the **amount** you eat. Unsaturated fats like vegetable oil, nuts, soft margarine, and fish are all healthy fats. Fat is high in calories, limit the amount that you add to foods to 30-45 mL (2-3 tablespoons) each day. This includes oil used in cooking, salad dressing, mayonnaise, and margarine.

## 2. Take Charge of Your Lunch

Make your lunch with healthy foods that you enjoy. This can help you make better choices. Include foods from all 4 food groups. Pack it up before you go to bed so you don't have to wake up earlier! Try some of these ideas:

- Pack left over stir fries, curries, or casseroles from dinner the night before. Warm them up at school.
- Make tuna or egg salad by mixing 5-10 mL (1-2 teaspoons) of mayonnaise with 2 hard boiled eggs (chopped) or ½ can of tuna.
- Stuff a whole grain pita with hummus. Add your favourite vegetables.
- Make a veggie pizza by spreading tomato sauce or pesto on pita bread. Top it with grated cheese, and your favourite vegetables. Roll it up. Eat it hot or cold.
- Add low fat yogurt, milk, or soy milk and your favourite fruit to any meal. You will have a tasty well balanced lunch.

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### 3. Be a Healthy Snacker

Snack foods like potato chips, nachos, cookies, and chocolate bars are high in calories and low in nutrients. Eating too much of these foods can be unhealthy. You can make healthier snacks yourself. Try to include foods from at least 2 food groups when snacking with one of them being a fruit or a vegetable. Here are some ideas:

- Cut up veggie sticks. Add hummus or a yogurt dip in a separate container.
- Make your own trail mix with a few different whole grain cereals, dried fruits and seeds.
- Mix low fat yogurt and 125 mL ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup) of your favourite berries. Add a sprinkle of your favourite whole grain cereal for a crunchy snack.
- Freeze yogurt containers and enjoy frozen yogurt as a cool after-school snack.

### 4. Eating out? Eat Smart

Eating out can be a fun way to spend time with your friends. When you eat out, it is easy to eat too much. Eating out too often can lead to weight gain. Try to limit the number of days per week that you eat out. When you do eat out, eat smart.

- Look for lower fat choices like grilled or baked chicken or fish. Avoid fried choices.
- Choose a single burger rather than several patties.
- Order steamed rice rather than fried rice.
- Choose thin crust pizza with vegetable toppings.
- Share a dessert or large meal with a friend.

### 5. Active Living

Physical activity includes all the activities you do every day. Activities like gym class, walking to school, and any sports or activities that you play. Aim for at least 90 minutes of activity each day to be at your best. Any activity that lasts for 10 minutes or more at a time counts toward your daily goal of 90 minutes. Use the suggestions below to increase your physical activity levels every day.

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- Walk or ride your bike to school or to visit your friends.
- Go for a walk at lunch time. Bring your friends.
- Play your favourite sports activity after school with friends or siblings.
- Dance to your favourite songs!
- Include any chores like piling wood, weeding the garden, or mopping the floor as part of your 90 minutes of activity.
- Not enough time to be active? Try cutting back on screen time. (Screen time is the amount of time you spend on the computer, playing video games, or watching TV.) Reduce your screen time by 15 minutes each day for one month. Next month, reduce screen time by 15 minutes more each day. Keep lowering your screen time until you are active for at least 90 minutes each day.

## Steps for Special Consideration

- If you want to lose weight, speak to your parents or a health professional first. While you are growing, weight loss is not always recommended. You need energy from the food you eat in order to continue to grow as tall and strong as you are meant to be.
- Unhealthy eating to lose weight can make you feel tired and weak and less able to do things you enjoy. It can also make it harder to think clearly. It can make school work take longer than it should. Poor eating habits can also cause health problems including weak bones later in life.
- Iron and calcium are two nutrients that are important for teens. Between the ages of 9 and 18, all teens need 3 to 4 servings of Milk and Milk Alternatives each day to get enough calcium for growing bones. Iron is important for growing bodies. It comes from fish, meat, beans, lentils, tofu whole grain products and some vegetables. Follow the advice on "Canada's Food Guide", to make sure you get enough calcium and iron.

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## Additional Resources

- Health Canada, "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide"  
[www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide)
- Health Canada's "Choosing Foods" fact sheet [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/choose-choix/index\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/choose-choix/index_e.html)
- Dietitians of Canada "EATracker" - Get personalized feedback on your daily food and activity choices. [www.eatracker.ca](http://www.eatracker.ca)
- "Family Guide to Physical Activity for Children (for ages 10 -14)"  
[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/child\\_youth/pdf/kids\\_family\\_guide\\_e.pdf](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/child_youth/pdf/kids_family_guide_e.pdf)
- "Canada's Physical Activity Guide" (for all ages) [www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com)

*These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.*



## Notes

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